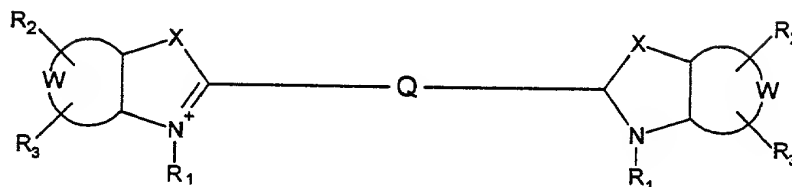


ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A symmetric cyanine of the formula:



(1)

wherein:

X is selected from the group consisting of O, S and  $C(CH_3)_2$ ;  
W represents non-metal atoms required to form a benzo-condensed or a naphto-condensed ring;

$R_1$  is selected from the group consisting of  $(CH_2)_nCH_3$ ,  $(CH_2)_nSO_3^-$  and  $(CH_2)_nSO_3H$ , wherein n is an integer selected from 0 to 6 when  $R_1$  is  $(CH_2)_nCH_3$ , and n is an integer selected from 3 to 6 when  $R_1$  is  $(CH_2)_nSO_3^-$  or  $(CH_2)_nSO_3H$ ;

$R_2$  and  $R_3$  are independently selected from the group consisting of H, a sulphonic moiety and a sulphonate moiety and

Q is a substituted polymethine bridge.